

**MAY  
JUN**  
2025

# STRATEGY HQ

the cooper group

# AGILITY

**ISN'T THE  
CASUAL INITIATIVE  
IT USED TO BE**

Today, It's the  
Whole Enchilada.

**PUT YOUR MIND  
INTO IT EDITION**





# If 2025 hasn't changed your mind about business agility, **nothing** ever will.

Dear Colleagues,

It's hard to believe we're well into the second quarter of 2025. It's been quite a ride so far, hasn't it?

It is with a sense of urgency that I'm delivering a series of articles that explore the critical role of business agility in today's rapidly changing business landscape. You might even say the changes we're seeing are unprecedented, and I won't disagree. I firmly believe that by embracing agility, organizations can adapt to disruption, innovate, and achieve sustainable growth, regardless of our new challenges.

Go ahead and say it. You want less talk about this thing called agility and more talk about real-world justifications for changing the way you think and operate your business – like, you know, real business impact.

What if I told you that both of those things are mandatory to get where you want to go? It's true. But I get it. A lot of companies are just plain weary of seeing and hearing the word agility. Such is the case with any overused, misunderstood, and poorly defined corporate buzzword.

However, I'm asking that you set aside the jargon for a few minutes and read this issue – because despite the lingo fatigue, agility matters way more than it ever has. My intent is to tell you why and how.

Welcome to the first issue in this important series.

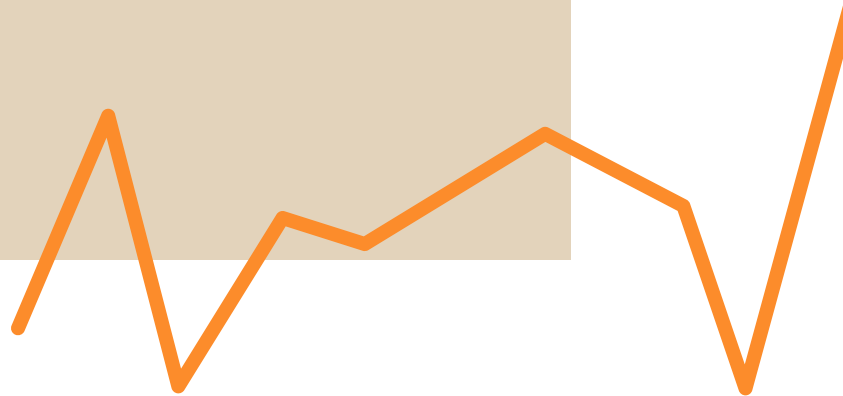
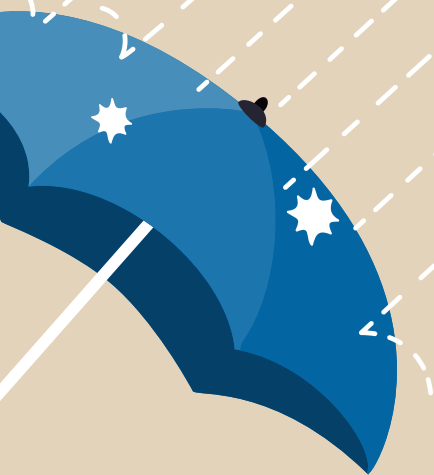
A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink that reads "David".

**David Cooper**  
CEO and Principal Strategist  
The Cooper Group



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by David Cooper

# Keep Building Your Agility Mindset – No Matter What

**T**he most important “why” for your company to become more agile is an unsettling reality for every business today. Maybe you know that reality all too well – how markets, trade practices, and the economy are shifting so fast that inflexible business models and outdated operational practices are no longer helping companies succeed and grow to their full potential.

There is a proactive reality to focus on instead, and that is the

need for a top-down and side-to-side mindset in your approach to business going forward. It’s called the agility mindset.

## **Let’s break down the real meaning of agility**

Agility is your ability to quickly adapt to changes, respond to market demands, and continually improve your operations, while maintaining efficiency, innovation, and customer satisfaction.

Yes, you’ve heard all of that

before. Can we get more specific? Also yes! Agility is a company-wide mindset trained on getting everyone and everything inside the business to focus on flexibility, speed, collaboration, and customer centricity.

Here are some of those real-world justifications (business impact) for changing how you do business:

**1. Make customers and market trends your crystal ball:** If you regularly engage customers by

asking for feedback and insights and you combine their input with where your market is headed, you will be able to adjust your business model, products, and services with sound business intelligence in responding to customer needs and market changes.

**2. Speed up your response to market demand:** If you minimize internal bureaucratic red tape, you can empower your teams to make faster, more informed decisions that lead to stronger development and sales performance.

**3. Eliminate impaired visibility:** By tearing down internal walls (silos) with cross-functional teams, you'll allow all departments within your organization to interact and work collaboratively to move goals forward in unison, rather than undermine and break things due to avoidable blind spots.

**4. Make technology the champion of productivity and value delivery:** Charge your IT leader or consultant to immediately identify ways you can leverage automation, artificial intelligence (AI), business intelligence, data analytics, and better workflow solutions to optimize productivity and supercharge your responsiveness to customers and the market.

**5. Choose courage and resilience! Look at change and market disruption squarely in the face.** Embrace them. Change is not your enemy. It's your ticket to the future if you choose to take it. Get your teams involved in brainstorming ideas and solutions. Dive into experimentation by fostering a culture where innovation is king and failure is an opportunity to learn and grow.



**Dive into experimentation by fostering a culture where innovation is king and failure is an opportunity to learn and grow.**

By adopting an agile mindset, your company will:

- Stay competitive in a fast-changing market, industry, and business world.
- Rapidly innovate and continually improve operations and customer service.
- Increase productivity by simultaneously promoting collaboration and decision-making autonomy.
- Improve customer satisfaction with timely responses to their evolving needs.

### **A growth mindset is a huge part of the equation**

Let's break this down, too. A growth mindset isn't just about an individual's appetite for advancement. It's infinitely larger than that. On the continuum of

a company's agility mindset, a growth mindset is an organization-wide philosophy of continuous learning held by all teams and team members. It is precisely the foundation that transports a company to innovation, resilience, and ongoing success.

For example, if you place a renewed and reenergized emphasis on continuous improvement, you will immediately have a competitive edge over companies that lack, well, a growth mindset.

A company that fosters an internal growth mindset:

- Is not hesitant to replace antiquated methods that pose threats to the organization
- Sees challenges as opportunities instead of obstacles to growth
- Is both agile and calculated in its



moves – not prone to kneejerk reactivity

- Encourages teams to experiment, take risks, learn from failure, and discover innovations
- Is adept at navigating market shifts, new technologies, and changing customer needs
- Increases employee engagement and talent retention through collaboration and learning
- Upskills and cross-skills employees to build a stronger, smarter, more loyal workforce
- Regularly solicits customer feedback and acts on fulfilling their needs
- Uses negative and critical

When teams, departments, or business units operate in isolation of each other, this guarantees inefficiencies and bottlenecks, wasteful redundancies, communication gaps, important things falling through the cracks, huge barriers to information sharing, and excruciatingly slow decision-making.

It makes me tired just thinking about it! And it goes without saying that internal silos not only cripple progress, but they make a company-wide agility mindset virtually impossible.

By contrast, breaking down internal silos in favor of cross-functional collaboration leads to faster decision-making, greater efficiencies, increased innovation, more effective customer service, and a far stronger and united company culture.

Do this now. Here are two fast and effective ways to break down silos and foster collaboration:

**1.** Immediately institute regular interdepartmental meetings in which leaders and team members can share important information, updates, insights, ideas, and find solutions to issues and challenges that affect different areas of the organization and customers.

**2.** Establish a recognition program that rewards teamwork and incentivizes team members to take initiative in collaborating across departments or business units.

By demolishing internal silos, you will unleash the agility mindset on your entire organization:

■ Cross-team collaboration will bring new perspectives to bear on problem areas, sparking quicker decisions, better solutions, reduced inefficiencies, and the elimination of redundant work and wasted resources.

■ You'll find your teams thinking outside the box, benefiting from their exposure to the expertise of other team members and disciplines. This will lead to employees feeling more connected and engaged through a shared purpose – and your company culture will blossom accordingly.

■ Cross-functional collaboration will expedite your mission and business strategy by streamlining the rollout of new products, services, and business models.

### **It's all in your company's mind(set)**

For too long, too many leaders have believed agility was just about moving fast. It's not. It's about being quick and smart. To become more agile in a volatile and unpredictable market is to become more resilient and adaptive, to create the internal capacity to make rapid but intelligent operational decisions – all while staying focused on the needs of your customers.

So, keep building your agility mindset – from the top down and from side to side. If you do this, you'll marshal the power and ingenuity of your entire workforce to succeed, grow, innovate, and seize new opportunities – no matter what challenges you face along the way.

## **Internal silos not only cripple progress, but they make a company-wide agility mindset virtually impossible.**



feedback to improve offerings and build a stronger brand

- Consistently outperforms competitors that resist change

### **Destroy the enemy within: Silos**

I touched on this earlier but want to emphasize its impact on businesses that aspire to an agility mindset.

# The Role of Leadership in Agile Organizations

A client and close colleague of mine once shared his father's managerial tenet that said, "The speed of the captain is the speed of the crew." Those words shaped the way he leads his team and company and have been pivotal during economic, supply chain, and other crises, such as the pandemic.

However, my colleague stipulated that "speed" means a lot of things – not just fast. It involves the energetic, ongoing fusion of critical thinking, diverse perspectives, monitoring the market, and assessing talent, customer, and development needs – and quickly arriving at decisions on which changes to make and ideas to pursue.

This captain's speed led his team to almost double annual revenues during and post-pandemic – a time when so many companies worldwide struggled with everything they had to survive.

Now that's a strong leader.

## **Strong leadership is what drives agility across an organization**

A company that aims to be truly agile must have leaders who are visionary, who enthusiastically inspire collaboration, flexibility, and innovation, and who are themselves quick to adapt to change. Just as critical, they promote a culture that empowers employees and prioritizes continuous learning.

That kind of leader is the opposite of those who resist change and fight to preserve internal hierarchies (control freaks), suppress innovative thinking and experimentation (risk-averse), slow decision-making to a crawl (laggards), and operate with no regard for departments or business units besides their own (siloed thinking).

Which type of leader do you want in charge of your company, business units, and people? If you're on the road to agility, you better choose the former.





# Effective leaders are adaptive, empowering, and visionary. They possess emotional intelligence and excel in change management.

## Traits to look for in an agile leader

The qualities and traits of agile leaders are what inspire, empower, and enable the rest of the organization to move toward and achieve goals in lockstep, and just as important, to work as one in assessing and leaping over challenges.

If your organization is pursuing your unique path to agility, focus on hiring or promoting people into key leadership roles who have a track record in demonstrating the ability to do the following:

- Break down silos between departments and teams to promote wide open communication.
- Actively engage and listen to team members and foster a shared mission across departments.
- Embrace change and view challenges as opportunities for learning and continuous improvement.
- Build a culture of innovation and experimentation – one that's safe, so that employees are confident in voicing ideas, taking risks, and finding repeatable solutions.

- Trust employees and teams: Give them the autonomy they need to make quick, smart decisions.
- Prioritize the need for requesting ongoing customer feedback – and act on it.
- Use real-time metrics and data analytics to make informed business and financial decisions.
- Balance speed with strategic thinking and planning to avoid reactive decisions that backfire.

## The right leaders avoid mistakes and optimize resources

The worst mistake a company can make on its road to becoming more agile is trying to set up agility as an internal process or framework – instead of treating it as the mindset and cultural shift that it really is.

For example, a company might invest in technologies specifically designed to enable agility, but the company lacks the right leadership to leverage that technology, properly assemble teams and decision-making processes, and derive ROI from the IT investment. This leads to wasted resources, inefficiency, diminished team morale – and failure to become more agile.

Or, a company might have all the right internal attributes in place – flexibility, continuous learning and improvement, cross-functional team collaboration, an innovation-driven culture, and teams with decision-making autonomy – but the company forgets to gather customer feedback or ignores it when they do. Without customer satisfaction and the sales customers generate, a company ceases to exist.

Other big pitfalls include trying to build an agile workforce without fostering an agile company culture, trying to force agility into areas where it won't work (finance, compliance, etc.), expecting immediate results, and failing to align agility with business goals. There are more, but you get the idea.

The gravity of the wrong leadership will never lift company agility to its full potential.

## Agility starts at the top

Effective leaders are adaptive, empowering, and visionary. They possess emotional intelligence and excel in change management. They empower their teams, break down silos, and foster a culture of continuous learning. And they make their companies more adaptable, innovative, and competitive.

Ensure your long-term success by choosing the right leaders to build your company's agility mindset and create the requisite company culture it needs to thrive.



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